

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3699

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY BERN

USMISSION GENEVA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SNAR, UK

SUBJECT: CONVENTION ON PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES

REF: STATE 138695

1. WE DISCUSSED STATUS OF UK RATIFICATION OF SUBJECT CONVENTION WITH FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY (DHSS) AND HOME OFFICE OFFICIALS. THEY REITERATED UK'S BROAD SYMPATHY WITH GOALS OF CONVENTION, BUT STATED UK WILL NOT BE IN POSITION TO RATIFY FOR SOMETIME. HOME OFFICE OFFICIALS ARE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED, HOWEVER, IN SEEING WHAT CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE IN US DRAFT ENABLING LEGISLATION. THEY WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THESE CHANGES WITH THE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE MISUSE OF DRUGS WHICH IS CURRENTLY ADVISING PARLIAMENT AND THE GOVERNMENT ON THIS ISSUE.

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2. ACCORDING TO FCO AND HOME OFFICE OFFICIALS, UK IS NOT IN POSITION TO RATIFY CONVENTION BECAUSE OF PROBLEMS OVER COMPLIANCE WITH SCHEDULE 3 AND 4 OF CONVENTION. THERE ARE 4 BARBITUATES AND 1 HYPNOTIC LISTED ON SCHEDULE 3 WHICH ARE NOT CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES UNDER THE TERMS OF THE MISUSE OF DRUGS ACT, 1971. THIS ACT IS THE DEFINITIVE PIECE OF DOMESTIC UK LEGISLATION ON DRUG ABUSE. THE ACT WOULD HAVE TO BE AMENDED BY PARLIAMENT TO INCLUDE SCHEDULE 3 DRUGS BEFORE THE CONVENTION COULD BE RATIFIED. OFFICIALS ARE HESITANT TO RECOMMEND SUCH AMENDMENT BECAUSE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL PROBLEMS. OVER NINE MILLION BARBITUATE PRESCRIPTIONS ARE WRITTEN IN THE UK EACH YEAR AND TO CONTROL THESE UNDER TERMS OF THE ACT WOULD BE A COSTLY AND PROBABLY NOT VERY EFFECTIVE UNDERTAKING.

3. IN ORDER TO CREATE MORE FAVORABLE CLIMATE IN WHICH TO INTRODUCE RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF BARBITUATES, THE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON DRUG ABUSE HAS INSTITUTED A CAMPAIGN ON USE AND RESTRICTION OF BARBITUATES (CURB). ITS PURPOSE IS TO ENCOURAGE THE MEDICAL PROFESSION TO CUT BACK ON THE PRESCRIPTIONS OF THESE DRUGS. OFFICIALS STATED THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO JUSTIFY BRINGING BARBITUATES UNDER CONTROL OF THE MISUSE OF DRUGS ACT BEFORE RESULTS OF CURB HAVE BEEN EVALUATED. IN ADDITION OFFICIALS SAID THAT OF THE ELEVEN VARIED SUBSTANCES INCLUDED UNDER SCHEDULE 4 OF THE CONVENTION, ONLY TWO ARE COVERED UNDER THE MISUSE OF DRUGS ACT. THE OTHER NINE ARE CONSIDERED NOT TO BE SUBJECT TO ABUSE. STUDIES INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF INCLUDING THESE SUBSTANCES UNDER THE ACT ARE, HOWEVER, UNDERWAY.

4. ACTION REQUEST: PLEASE PROVIDE US ASAP WITH COPY US DRAFT ENABLING LEGISLATION AND BACKGROUND ON CHANGES WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE TO SATISFY US CRITICS OF CONVENTION.

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